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ROLE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SME) IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of small and medium enterprises (SME) in women empowerment and poverty alleviation in Southern Punjab. The findings showed that the education level of the women, participation in SMEs, skills development index, employed persons in the household, the value of physical assets, women's economic, familial, and social empowerment index adversely and significantly influenced the of poverty while the household size and family setup positively and significantly influenced poverty. In order to alleviate poverty in Pakistan and specifically in Southern Punjab women's participation in the labor force must be encouraged, educational facilities for women should be provided especially in the rural areas, technical education should also be promoted which will not only empower the women but will also open the doors of employment. Further, transportation facilities should be improved to enhance women's participation. Credit facilities at low cost may be provided to women as key constraint in the success of SMEs is the lack of capital.

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INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are seen as the engine of economic growth for the development of every country. The biggest gain of the sector is its ability to operate at a low cost of production. SMEs have higher employment generation opportunities as compared to large corporations. SMEs are the key drivers of growth, employment, the reduction of poverty, creation of wealth, equitable income distribution, (John-Akamelu and Muogbo, 2018). SMEs are source of increased economic productivity and ultimately improving the well-being of people by reducing poverty... Not only SMEs play a major complementary role in global industrialization but also serve as agents of structural transition. Development in SMEs also raises the degree

of specialization (Sharafat *et al.*, 2014). Small and medium enterprises play a prominent role in the new financial system. Developing markets that have real work and income dispersal problems is more crucial. It helps to gain a more influential yield, organize jobs in parts and become the primary stage for the vast activities of the future. It is split into two classes, business on a wide scale, and small-scale industry. The growth of small and medium-sized enterprises is a strong mystery triggering the development of the Gross Domestic Product (Awan *et al.*, 2015).

The world's developing countries are facing serious gender inequality problems that lead to extreme poverty and sluggish economic growth. Pakistan is also facing the same dilemma. Socio-economic factors such as high

population growth rates, weak economic conditions, social and cultural restrictions and political instability dramatically exacerbate Pakistan's state of poverty. Since its independence, Pakistan has inherited the challenge of poverty. Female demographic that accounts for fifty-two percent of the country's overall population are the biggest explanation for poverty due to their low share of economic activities. Whereas the women's participation in economic activities will also reduce the threat of violence against women. Further it will also increase the living standard of the women. Women's economic status is a better predictor of living conditions for themselves and their families (Haq and Amin, 2014).

Though women's empowerment is a significant part of developing countries' development policies but there are several challenges to achieve this goal. On a theoretical basis, there is much discussion about what liberation is and how to achieve it (Kabeer, 1999). There is an internal difference in the definition of empowerment based on socio-economic, cultural, and many other social factors (Dutta, 2014). Empowerment further increases the ability of individuals or communities to make decisions and turn those decisions into positive behavior and effects (Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005). Women's empowerment is seen as a means of reducing child and infant mortality through education and wellbeing of mothers and stimulates economic development through the participation of women in labor (Akram *et al.*, 2011). Reducing poverty is directly connected to economic empowerment. It is recognized that women's empowerment is important for economic development and the reduction of global poverty. The idea of women's empowerment is used to recognize poverty-stricken and impoverished women's circumstances. There are several explanations for weakening women in developing countries. Men demonstrate restrictions on women, and ruling social, economic, and political groups over the less dominant (Nadim and Nurlukman, 2017). Poverty is a stipulation under which people cannot meet the basic economic standard of living. Poverty is not only a curse for people, but it also has a complex effect on emerging countries, as Pakistan is now facing this problem more generally due to its political instability (Theng and Boon, 1996).

Pakistan consists of four provinces and Punjab province is the largest province in terms of population. Southern Punjab consists of 16.88 percent of the total population

of Pakistan. The total population of Southern Punjab is 35,080,792, about 48.95 percent population is female. Southern Punjab consists of three divisions namely the Multan division, Bahawalpur division, and DG Khan division. Multan division is the largest and developed division in comparison to the other divisions of Southern Punjab.

Southern Punjab is comparatively less prosperous than the other parts of Punjab, particularly its rural areas. In rural areas of Southern Punjab, several female workers can be observed. These workers are concentrated in few conventional sectors that are characterized by low technology and low levels of production. These sectors usually require skills that are essentially the extension of household skills, or that represent a particular experience of women in education and work. It has also been noted that women's income from rural areas of Southern Punjab is more likely spent on fulfilling the basic needs of their families. These women usually invest the majority of their business profits in their children's homes, housing, clothes, and schooling instead of reinvesting. (Azid *et al.*, 2001). However, women in urban areas are especially engaged in beautician work, home decoration, and embroidery. Due to the low employment opportunities educated women are also engaged in these activities at a small-scale level. It is, therefore, important to consider the role of small and medium enterprises in women empowerment and poverty alleviation in Southern Punjab. The main objective of this study is to investigate the role of small and medium enterprises in women empowerment and poverty alleviation in Southern Punjab. The general objectives are as follows:

- To analyze the factors of women, work participation in small and medium enterprises in South Punjab
- To examine the socio-economic and demographic factors of women empowerment in Southern Punjab.
- To investigate the influence of women, work participation in SME's and women empowerment on Poverty Alleviation in Southern Punjab

LITERATURE REVIEW

Faridi *et al.* (2009) studied the impact of education on the involvement of women in the labor force. Preliminary study findings showed that there was a favorable correlation between the involvement in

schooling and the engagement of the Female Labor Force. In the Logit Regression equation, the coefficients of all levels of education except for basic up to middle-level education was found important. The position of the education of parents turns out to be negligible while the education status of the partner has a strong and important effect on the involvement of women in the labor force. Thus, the study concludes that educated women succeed in gaining jobs, increasing production, and growth.

Avazalipour *et al.* (2012) analyzed the position of the Iranian economy's headed household focused on analyzing their role in economic activities. The findings have shown that the household level plays a great role in women's economic activities. So that women play a large role in controlling household expenses as opposed to men on average. In 2006, the empirical analysis of gender in a logistic model shows that that household whose head was men are more likely to be working than those households whose head was women. In general, according to these figures, while female heads of households are less likely to be employed than male heads of households, if female heads of households have college degrees, they could be more likely to be employed than male heads.

Sharafat *et al.* (2014) looked at the effect of SMEs on Pakistan's poverty. In this analysis, the data for the era 1972-2008 were used. The study findings indicated a high and poverty-reducing effect of Pakistan's small-scale output from the industries. To resolve the funding challenges faced by SMEs in Pakistan the policymakers should adopt policies to develop the structured finance markets. The creation of a robust SME sector in Pakistan would be helpful by simplifying lending procedures, enforcing credit law, and reducing credit costs.

Faridi and Ayesha (2014) described the factors impacting the decision of qualified women to take part in the labor force. A field survey conducted in Multan, using a basic random sampling methodology, collected the data for this research. The findings of the earnings equation suggest that for each additional year, factors such as women living in an urban environment and their level of schooling and experience are correlated with a significant rise in earnings. The number of children is having a negative and important effect on the earnings for women. The working hours model indicates age and number of completed school years have a positive impact on working hours and a negative effect on

working hours as demonstrated by the number of dependents and the number of hours spent in household operation.

Haq and Amin (2014) explored the role and position of working women in family income and their commitment to family poverty reduction. The majority (56 percent) of respondents claim they have good access to credit. Easy credit access has been effective in poverty alleviation. About 35% of respondents found cultural social and economic limitations to be the primary explanation for non-participation by women. Thirty-three percent claimed that the toughest workplace conditions were the biggest reasons for women not taking part. 29 percent claimed that society should grant women rights, 21 percent stressed proper educational facilities, 25 percent said that society should provide women with work opportunities and 20 percent said that society should provide women with other facilities.

Awan *et al.* (2015) explored the role of SMEs in poverty alleviation in Pakistan. This research was carried out in the Khanewal district. Collected data showed that small and medium-sized enterprises committed to the reduction of deprivation and unemployment were exceptional. The results showed that small and medium-sized enterprises had a strong effect on the income level of the respondents and that a negative link between participation in poverty and SMEs was noted.

Shaheen *et al.* (2015) identified the different factors which decide the status of female employment. The data were gathered by a field survey containing 402 females. The findings revealed that age, educational success, marital status, and involvement of children over the age of 10 have a significant effect on women's work. Children under 10 years of age, income, a major illness, and household size are adversely and substantially linked to female employment. Total family work and the number of dependents have a positive impact on women's decisions as a successful earner while hurting self-employment and underemployment. The study proposed that the provision of educational services should be rendered with considerable expenditure. Everyone should be granted health facilities to improve the health status of staff. Mincer (1962) explained that, depending on a permanent wage rate and wages, the individual chooses the level of work time. He found that an increase in the size of the income specifically influences the time spent with family and business operations. It has a detrimental influence. The pay levels

of Wife have a clear positive effect on the supply of female labor, while the number of children also has a major influence on the lifetime supply of female labor. He also indicated that high unemployment rates and fluctuations in the general economic cycle deter a female from taking part in job activities.

Farooq (2017) aimed to investigate the women's work participation and women empowerments on household poverty in the southern Punjab region. The outcome indicated that respondent's age and household size had a significant role in increasing poverty in the region. Moreover, respondent's education, work participation, good sanitation facility, no of earners, women's social and economic empowerment significantly reduced the probability of poverty.

John-Akamelu and Muogbo (2018) assessed the function of small and medium-sized enterprises in the eradication of poverty in Nigeria. The study showed that a successful growth plan should rise to large-scale capital intensity if employed by such industrialists. The study recommended that SMEs receive their loans in low-interest rates from financial institutions so that SMEs' development may be increased. The effect of female labor force participation on national income was examined by Awan and Sadia (2018). Data were obtained from the Pakistan Economic Survey for the period 2005-2015 for this reason. The result showed that female participation has steadily increased with the passage of time and unemployment and birth rates have declined. It is a sign of health that female participation in work has improved and will ultimately increase national income.

Manzoor *et al.* (2019) investigated the association between SMEs and poverty eradication in SAARC countries. The results of the FEM were misleading. For empirical analysis, the regression equations for each nation were used. The findings showed three key factors in reducing poverty in the SAARC region: SME production, openness to trade, and development of the social sector were important factors to reduce poverty.

Zafar *et al.* (2019) looked at the effect of small and medium-sized businesses on poverty eradication in Pakistan over the 2001-2017 timeframe. Results showed that there is a detrimental and substantial correlation between small and medium-sized enterprises and deprivation. Furthermore, human capital has reduced poverty dramatically in Pakistan. When human resources increased, it caused lower levels of

development in deprivation. Trade and inflation both have a substantial correlation with deprivation in the same manner, but inflation and poverty have a positive relationship although trade has a negative association with the rate of growth of poverty in Pakistan.

Jabeen *et al.* (2020) aimed to evaluate the impact of Khyber region's women's traditional economic undertakings which complement household economy through earning, savings and assessment of factors that influence the women's productivity. The study was undertaken in the Khyber region of Pakhtunkhwa province, around 68.33% respondents were illiterate, 47.71% lied between the ages 31 and 40 years, and 47.92% lived in joint family system. Due to cultural norms around 71.88% of respondent's economic activities were based indoors. It concluded that various social, cultural and economic factors adversely affect women's productive potential.

METHODOLOGY

The data of 650 working and non-working women are collected for this study. The working women are those that are participating in small and medium enterprises. It is a very difficult task for the researcher to find those women however information on women-owned SMEs is gathered from the Multan women chamber of commerce. To collect data simple and proportioned random sampling is chosen. As Southern Punjab consists of three divisions the data from every division is collected by using a proportionate sampling technique. Data were collected during the period 2019-20. A total of 650 respondents were surveyed. Based on the female population 228 respondents were selected from the Multan division, 212 women were selected from the Bahawalpur division and 210 women were selected from the Dera Ghazi Khan division. Each division is further divided into districts and data from each district was also collected by using a proportionate sampling technique. To examine either the household is poor or non-poor international poverty line 1.90\$ a day is exercised in a study. A binary logistic and ordinary least square method is applied to calculate the results. Understanding the factors of women work participation in SME's, women empowerment and poverty alleviation. This study investigates the role of women's work participation in small and medium enterprises and women empowerment on poverty alleviation. To accomplish this task this study first investigates the

factors of women work participation in SME's, secondly, it investigates the factors of women empowerment and the role of SMEs in empowering women, and lastly, it investigates the influence of women work participation in SME's and women empowerment on poverty alleviation. For this purpose, different socio-economic and demographic variables have been used in this study. There theoretical link with dependent variables is presented in this section.

Women Participation in SME's

Women's work participation in small scale and medium enterprises is taken as a categorical variable in this study. Women working in SME's are assigned a value 1 and women that are not working in SME's assigned value 0. This variable is taken as a dependent variable in factors of SME's participation model and an independent variable in women empowerment and poverty alleviation models.

Women Empowerment

The women empowerment index is used to see its impact on poverty alleviation. This variable is used as an independent variable in poverty alleviation models. In the factors of the women empowerment model, women empowerment and its dimensions are used as the dependent variable. Three dimensions of women empowerment have been used to measure the level of women empowerment in Southern Punjab these are economic empowerment of women, social empowerment of women, and familial empowerment of women. All these types of empowerments are measured with different indicators and the average of all these indicators response is used as the women empowerment index. This index is estimated as follows:

$$WEMPI = \frac{ECOEMP + SOCEMP + FAMEMP}{3}$$

Where; WEMPI= Women Empowerment Index
ECOEMP= Economic Empowerment of Women
SOCEMP= Social Empowerment of Women
FAMEMP= Familial Empowerment of Women

To measure, economic empowerment of women five indicators has been used such as "control over spending", "independence in making expenditures", "own bank account", "access to microfinance", and "women own assets". The average response of all these indicators is used as the economic empowerment index.

It is calculated as follows:

$$ECOEMP = \frac{ECO_1 + ECO_2 + ECO_3 + ECO_4 + ECO_5}{5}$$

Familial empowerment of women is also measured by using five indicators such as "decision about child healthcare", "decision about own health", "resolves family matters", "decision about child education, marriage", and "family decision making". The average response of all these indicators is used as a familial empowerment index. It is calculated as follows:

$$FAMEMP = \frac{FAM_1 + FAM_2 + FAM_3 + FAM_4 + FAM_5}{5}$$

Social empowerment of women is also estimated by using five indicators such as "visiting market alone", "access to media or internet", "freedom to express views", "visit relatives", "visit hospitals, parks". The average response of all these indicators is used as social empowerment index. It is calculated as follows:

$$SOCEMP = \frac{SOC_1 + SOC_2 + SOC_3 + SOC_4 + SOC_5}{5}$$

Poverty Status

The poverty status of the household is adopted as a dependent variable in this study. This variable is a dummy variable, is equal to zero if the household is non poor or falls above the poverty line and is equal to 1 if the household is poor or falls below the poverty line. Detailed list of variables is tabulated in Table 1.

Age of Women

The age of women is used as an explanatory variable. The age of women is a key demographic variable in determining the working status, empowerment of women, and poverty. In the literature, it was observed that women with higher ages have more chances to participate in the labor force it also boosts women empowerment and reduces the overall poverty of the household (Faridi & Rashid, 2014). With the increase in age, women experience also increases resultant income increases indicating a negative association between the age of women and poverty is negative.

Education of Women

Education is the most important human capital variable that affects the working status, empowerment, and poverty status of the household. Educated women are

more productive and skilled so that employment opportunities for these women increase. Due to high education participation in economic activities, income, welfare in society (Faridi and Rashid, 2014), and empowerment of women boosts (Bushra and Wajiha, 2015). It is assumed that women's education negatively influences the poverty status of the household. Women's education is measured as completed years of schooling.

Marital Status of Women

The marital status was taken as a dichotomous variable. If the woman is married, value 1 and for unmarried value 0 was assigned. The marital status of women also

influences the working decision, empowerment, and poverty in households. It is supposed that married women face low social constraints and allow them to take participate in economic activities as compared to unmarried women (Faridi *et al.*, 2009). Considering the women empowerment, it is also supposed that after marriage women have control over spending, decision making, and family income so that it positively empowers the women. As married women can easily take participate in economic activities it enhances the income of the household and chances of such households to fall below the poverty line declines.

Table 1. List of Variables.

Variable	Variable's Descriptions	
Dependent Variables		
POV	Poverty Status of household	= 1 if household per capita income falls below the poverty line, = 0 if household per capita income falls above the poverty line
SMEP	Women work participation in SMES	= 1 if women participation in SME's, = 0 otherwise
ECOEMP	Women Economic empowerment Index	It is measured by taking the average response of economic empowerment indicators
SOCEMP	women social empowerment of Index	It is measured by taking the average response of social empowerment indicators
FAMEMP	Women familial empowerment index	It is measured by taking the average response of familial empowerment indicators
Independent Variables		
AGER	Age of respondent	Age of women in years
EDUR	Education of respondent	Completed years of schooling of women
HHSIZE	Household size	Total members of the household
EMPP	Employed members in the household	Total number of employed members in a household
FASET	Family setup	= 1 if joint family, = 0 if nuclear family system
LNPHYA	Natural log of value of physical assets	Value of physical assets
LNHHY	Natural log of household income	Total monthly income of the household
SDI	Skills development index	Measured by taking the average response of skill indicators

Household Size

Household size is another imperative demographic variable that influences the household poverty status, women empowerment, and women working status. A household that consists of a large number of members with more dependent persons increases the chances of women participating in the labor force although larger household size can also negatively affect the women's work participation in the labor force. Larger household size increases the women's responsibilities in a household so that she may not be able to participate in

the labor force.

Household size positively affects the poverty when a greater number of dependent members in a household it lowers the per capita income of the household (Ahmad and Faridi, 2020; Chaudhry *et al.*, 2009). Household size negatively influences the poverty when household consists of more employed members than dependent members so that it positively affects the per capita income and negatively affects the poverty status of the household.

Family Setup

The family setup is taken as a categorical variable. It is measured as a joint or nuclear family system. Women living in a joint family system have more chances to participate in economic activities as compared to the women living in a nuclear family system.

Area of Residence

The area of residence of women is a demographic variable and is taken as a dummy variable. Women living in rural areas assigned a value 1 and women living in urban areas assigned a value 0. Women living in rural areas faced a lot of social constraints to take participate in economic activities as compared to urban women. In rural areas, women are mostly engaged in agriculture, embroidery, handicrafts, and livestock but the wages in these activities are low in comparison to the urban areas where women receive higher wages. It is expected that rural area residence of women positively related to poverty, negatively related to women empowerment, and women's work participation in SME's.

Number of Earners in a Household

The number of earners in a household positively influences the per capita income of the household and negatively influences household poverty (Shah *et al.*, 2020). However, a greater number of earners in a household may decline the women's chances to participate in economic activities. More earners in a household mean high household income, a high level of household income shows the well-being of the household so that it positively affects the women's empowerment.

Skills Development Index

To participate in economic activities women must be well educated or must-have skills that help women to enter the SME's. Women skills development index is constructed by using different dimensions such as women have skills in the computer, embroidery, handicrafts, beautician work, boutique, handmade garments, etc. these skills help the women to take part in economic activities so that her income boosts. The formula of skill development index is given as follows:

$$SDI = \frac{SK_1 + SK_2 + SK_3 + SK_4 + SK_5 + SK_6}{6}$$

Household Head Education

Household head education is important in examining the poverty status of a household, women work participation status, and women empowerment. Educated household heads have more skills and employment opportunities and earn higher income as compared to the low educated household heads (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2009). Women work participation decision is also significantly influenced by household head education. Educated household heads are aware of the importance of women participation in economic activities they know that women's participation can empower the women and household well-being (Faridi *et al.*, 2009). On the other side, uneducated household heads based their thoughts on dogmatic believes they do not allow the women to take participate in economic activities resultantly such households have low chances to fall above the poverty line.

Household Head Employment Status

The employment status of households also affects the women's decision to participate in the labor force, women empowerment, and poverty. Employed household heads with higher wages negatively affect the poverty status of household although it may also negatively affect the women work participation and positively affects the women empowerment. This study used household head employment status as a categorical variable either the household head is participating in the labor force or not.

Number of Children in Household

The number of children in the household is a significant determinant of women's work participation status. In the literature, it was observed that household with a greater number of children negatively affects the women employment status. More children in the household require much attention of women so that women are enabled to take participate in economic activities (Faridi *et al.*, 2009).

Household Assets

The physical assets of the household show the wealth of the household. A household with a high value of physical assets inversely connected to household poverty. A household with a high value of physical assets implies the high wealth of the household such households can invest their wealth in productive activates to generate

further income (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2009). It is assumed that household assets negatively affect the poverty status of the household.

Operational Model

The functional form of the model to investigate the role

of women work participation and economic empowerment of women, social empowerment of women, and familial empowerment of women on poverty alleviation in Southern Punjab is given as follows:

$$Pov = (AGER, EDUR, SMEP, SDI, FASET, HHSIZE, EMPP, LNPHYA, ECOEMP, SOCEMP, FAMEMP)$$

The functional form of the model is as follows:

$$Pov = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AGER + \beta_2 EDUR + \beta_3 SMEP + \beta_4 SDI + \beta_5 FASET + \beta_6 HHSIZE + \beta_7 EMPP + \beta_8 LNPHYA + \beta_9 ECOEMP + \beta_{10} SOCEMP + \beta_{11} FAMEMP + \mu_i$$

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
POVERTY	0.40	0.491
SMEP	0.61	0.488
ECOEMP	0.632	0.2163
SOCEMP	0.686	0.2373
FAMEMP	0.670	0.2432
WEMPI	0.6626	0.2110
AGER	31.610	7.588
EDUR	11.070	3.958
MRST	0.530	0.500
SDI	0.4543	0.2092
HHSIZE	6.560	2.636
PHYASSETS	4734510.62	11292970
INCOME	58125.06	30384.39

Source: Author's Calculations

RESULTS

Poverty Profile

It is found that the incidence of poverty in the DG khan division originates to be higher. DG khan division is the most underdeveloped region of Southern Punjab. The lowest incidence of poverty in terms of divisions is found in Multan division as the Multan division is the most developed division of Southern Punjab. The incidence of poverty in rural areas is found to be more than the incidence of poverty in urban areas in Southern Punjab and its divisions.

Regression Analysis

To examine the role of women's work participation in SME's and women's empowerment on poverty alleviation the dependent variable is used as the poverty status of households. It is a dummy variable that is equal to zero when the household lies above the poverty in this case household is considered as non-poor while if its

value is equal to 1 it suggests that the household falls below the poverty line and household is considered as poor. The poverty line has been measured by the international poverty line in this study and after transformed into Pakistan currency units it sets to 8970Rs per person per month. Table 4 show that age of the women, education level of the women, participation in SME's, skills development index, employed persons in the household, the value of physical assets, women economic empowerment, women social empowerment, and women familial empowerment are the factors that inversely influenced the likelihood of poverty while the household size and family setup are the factors that positively influenced the likelihood of poverty. The Mcfadden R² shows the goodness of fit of the model and its value is 0.2963. The LR statistic value is 259.95 and its probability value is 0.000 it indicates that the model is overall statistically significant.

Table 3. Poverty status of households by area wise in Southern Punjab.

Division	Area	Poor Households	Non-Poor Households	Total Households	Poverty Incidence
South Punjab (overall)	Rural	170	237	407	41.76
	Urban	93	150	243	38.27
Multan	Rural	56	86	142	39.43
	Urban	30	56	86	34.88
DG Khan	Rural	55	72	127	43.30
	Urban	34	49	83	40.96
Bahawalpur	Rural	59	79	138	42.75
	Urban	29	45	74	39.18

Source: Author's Calculations from Survey Data, 2019-20

Table 4. Binary logistic estimates of the impact of women participation in SME's and women empowerment dimensions on poverty alleviation.

Variable	Coefficient	Marginal Effects	Std. Error	z-Statistic	Prob.
CONSTANT	3.0543	----	1.0177	3.0009	0.0027
Women's Characteristics					
AGER	-0.0027	-0.001	0.0141	-0.1927	0.8471
EDUR	-0.2451	-0.059	0.0495	-4.9515	0.0001
SMEP	-0.4868	-0.117	0.2563	-1.8992	0.0575
SDI	-1.0809	-0.260	0.5432	-1.9896	0.0466
Household Characteristics					
FASET	0.1710	0.041	0.2400	0.7126	0.4760
HHSIZE	0.4989	0.120	0.0702	7.1000	0.0000
EMPM	-0.6385	-0.154	0.1180	-5.4092	0.0000
LNPHYA	-0.1526	-0.037	0.0524	-2.9095	0.0036
Women Empowerment					
ECOEMP	-2.3242	-0.560	0.8127	-2.8595	0.0042
SOCEMP	-0.2974	-0.072	0.7446	-0.3994	0.6896
FAMEMP	-1.3681	-0.330	0.6452	-2.1205	0.0340
McFadden R ²			0.2963		
Mean dependent var			0.4046		
LR Statistic			259.95		
LR statistic (Prob.)			0.0000		
Total Observations			650		

Dependent Variable: Household Poverty Status

Source: Author's Calculations

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that women's participation in SME's and women's empowerment are important factors to alleviate poverty in Southern Punjab. To alleviate the poverty generally in Pakistan and specifically in Southern Punjab the important recommendations are as follows:

- It is found in the study that women's work participation in economic activities negatively influences poverty so that to alleviate poverty in Southern Punjab women's participation in the labor force must be encouraged. Women's participation in the labor force is positively related to the education level of women so that

educational facilities for women should be provided especially in the rural areas. Technical education should also be promoted this not only empower the women but it opens the doors of employment.

- Women's empowerment is found to be negatively related to the poverty status of households. To empower women government organizations should conduct seminars to demonstrate the importance of women's education, women participation in the labor force.
- Women's participation in small scale and medium enterprises must be encouraged as it originated a negative determinant of poverty. The job

opportunities for women may be guaranteed at their nearest to home. Transportation facilities should be improved to enhance women's participation in the labor force.

- The study found that household size positively related to poverty. To control the household size women's education is a key factor that may control fertility in a family.
- The provision of health facilities must be ensured by the government because good health with appropriate nutrition not only improves the worker's efficiency but it also boosts the household earnings. Resultantly the incidence of poverty may reduce.
- To promote small scale and medium enterprises credit facilities at low cost may be provided as the most important constraint that the SME's face is lack of finance.
- Policy making is needed to address lack of rest hours, recreational activities for working women to help their recovery from health fatigue and psychological pressures.

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